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# DEPARTMENT OF VISITING NURSING AND SOCIAL WELFARE



IN CHARGE OF

EDNA L. FOLEY, R.N.

[To keep this department up-to-date and helpfully interesting, nurses in social work of every description and superintendents of district nursing associations are asked to put the address of its editor—104 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago—on their mailing files for items, clippings, and annual reports.]

## BABY TENT WORK IN CHICAGO

By M. PEARL RINGLAND, Supervisor

THE summer tents for sick babies opened June 25 and closed September 18, 1912. There were eight tents, located in different congested localities, supported by the Elizabeth McCormick Memorial Fund, and supervised by the Visiting Nurse Association. The tents opened daily at 8 A.M. and closed between 5 and 6 P.M. There were on duty at each tent two or three nurses, one interne, and one tent woman. One nurse in each tent was assigned head nurse. Her duties were much the same as the duties of a hospital head nurse. She also assisted the attending physician and interne during the morning clinic, and prepared all the feedings. In the larger tents, where there were three nurses on duty, the two assistant nurses were responsible for certain duties. For instance, one nurse bathed all the babies while the other gave the ordered flushings. The nurse who bathed the babies was responsible for the giving of foods and medicines, while the other nurse, with the assistance of the tent woman, changed the napkins, and recorded on the bedside records the character, consistency, color, odor, and frequency of the stools. If a diaper was to be saved for the physician's inspection, it was marked with the baby's name, and wrapped in paper. All others were kept in a covered galvanized iron can, in a strong lysol solution. Twice each day they were washed and rinsed in cold water, by the tent woman, and sent, wet, to the laundry every afternoon.

Two graduate nurses were employed for follow-up work. They communicated daily with the head nurses of the tents and received new calls. If a sick baby was not brought back to the tent, a nurse visited the home, and if the baby was found to be too ill for tent care, she en-

deavored to send it to a hospital. The homes of all the babies cared for during the summer were visited by the follow-up nurses, who took reports of home conditions and sleeping quarters back to the tents. Babies too ill to be cared for at home during the night, whom the parents refused to send to a hospital, were kept in the tents and a special nurse employed for night duty.

Supplies were purchased in large quantities and kept in a central place, from which the requisitions from each tent were filled. Only the babies of the small wage earners and of the families who were assisted by the United Charities, or the county, or both, were cared for as tent patients.

The average rent paid by the majority of the parents is \$10.00 per month and the average wage received \$10.00 per week.

During the summer there were 394 babies cared for as tent patients and 794 as clinical cases, making a total of 1188. Of this number, 642 recovered, many were improved, and 47 died within three days after leaving the tents.

Very complete records were kept of every baby. In visiting the homes the nurses found many families whose living conditions must have had direct influence on the baby, being contributing factors to its illness.

#### ITEMS

ILLINOIS.—So many good ideas have come to visiting nurses by way of Cleveland that we keep expecting more, so it is not with surprise but with a great deal of interest that we learned of the existence of a public library substation at the Babies' Hospital and Dispensary for the use of the nurses. Fiction, travel, and sociology make up most of the one hundred or more volumes, which are changed from time to time at the suggestion of Harriet Leet, the superintendent of nurses. This substation is attended to by the force at the dispensary, and the nurses may change books as frequently as they wish. Any book not at the substation may be ordered from the library, and often new books are purchased for the use of this particular substation. Burning with a desire to emulate this praiseworthy attempt to make the public library serve all corners of its public, a Chicago visitor to the conferences of the Society for the Prevention of Infant Mortality returned to ask a similar substation for the Chicago visiting nurses. Most unfortunately, the office for this new branch is two short blocks from the big public library building, the best of reasons for the request being courteously but firmly refused.

When the desire cometh, however, it is difficult to put out of one's

heart visions of rows of interesting and pertinent books on social work and kindred topics, and at the psychological moment a gift of \$50.00 from an interested director made a nucleus possible, and now the library boasts of more than fifty volumes and is still growing. The Infant Welfare Society, whose rooms adjoin those of the Visiting Nurse Association, is also going to add to this number and its staff will have all the privileges of the "library," if one may so designate three shelves in a glass doored book-case. The books include some one ought to read, some one wants to read, and some one has to read, with Osler's "Practice of Medicine" and Dorland's "Dictionary" as permanent office references. A simple index-card system has been installed, and the value of the open shelf, close at hand, over the card-catalogue two blocks away is being rapidly demonstrated. Nurses are not too busy to read if the opportunity is given them and thus both Cleveland and Chicago are demonstrating the advisability of moving the mountain a little nearer Mahomet.

THE Chicago District Nurses' Club held two very successful meetings in October and November, with a large attendance at each. As the October meeting fell just before the elections, a political meeting was planned and three representatives of the leading parties attempted to expound their respective platforms. Nurses interested in planning a similar programme are advised to set a time-limit for speakers.

RUTH SMITH, R.N. (St. Bernard's Hospital), and formerly a member of the staff of the Chicago Visiting Nurse Association, has been appointed assistant truant officer for the town of Quincy.

WISCONSIN.—The Beloit Visiting Nurse Association has recently been organized and Anna Luetscher, R.N. (Milwaukee Hospital, 1910), has been engaged as visiting nurse. Miss Luetscher spent the month of November with the Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago.

PENNSYLVANIA.—The Lebanon Visiting Nurse Association has recently had a most successful Red-Letter Day by which it raised \$1,110.01. The idea for this novel way of letting all the citizens share in its annual subscriptions was borrowed (*via* this column) from the Jamestown, N. Y., Visiting Nurse Association, which has used this method successfully for the past two years. It is a very ingenious, appealing, and not at all disagreeable way to raise funds, and will probably help to hasten the day when "tagging" may be done away with. Selma Lin-

coln, R.N. (Augustana, Chicago), of Jamestown, and Anna L. McCoy, R.N. (Jewish Hospital, Philadelphia), of Lebanon, are the visiting nurses whose societies adopted this method of raising a large share of their annual budget. The Lebanon society is the only one in its county and is in its first year. Sixty young women served as distributors of the red letters and later as collectors of the little coin envelopes, and the following appeal, printed on scarlet paper in black ink, deserves to have brought forth such prompt and generous response.

“AN INVESTMENT THAT PAYS

“An investment of Kindness on your part will make it possible for those of our city who are unable to afford the cost of hospital care, yet needing professional service, to have the aid of the Visiting Nurse whose mission is to give the patient professional attention, supply sick-room necessities for the patient's comfort, and to give such instruction as will enable the family properly to care for the patient. We also aim to aid those in need, within the limits of the funds at our command.

“There are many chronic sufferers in our city to whom the Visiting Nurse has been an untold blessing. Could you but see the legion of grateful mothers and little children, to whom the nurse has been a benediction, you would say, ‘It pays.’

“This is our first Red-Letter Day. Our nurse has made 2486 visits up to date.

“To continue this helpful work requires more money. Your cheerful, cordial investment in this bond of sympathy is asked.

“Please put your contribution in the enclosed envelope which will be called for to-morrow by the authorized collector whose blue bag stenciled with a Greek Cross in white is the badge of authority.”

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Home work in the tenements is a continual menace to the health of the entire nation. This is the substance of the testimony given by all the witnesses at the hearing held December 5 by the New York State Factory Investigating Commission in New York City.

It was shown that the home work of women and children of all ages endangers not only the health of the workers themselves, by making them ready victims of tuberculosis and other diseases, but also the health of the prosperous public in the most remote localities to which the products of the tenements are sent. Witness after witness told of tuberculous patients working on food and clothing; of garments, feathers, doll-clothes and other things found in process of manufacture in the same room with the most infectious and dangerous diseases.